

Quick Reference for Federal Agencies on 2009-2010 Influenza Season Planning and Response

Local flu conditions will influence the decisions that local public health officials will make regarding community-level strategies to lessen the spread of flu. Know where to get timely and accurate information that can guide your responses in each location where your operations reside. Be prepared to use multiple measures to protect workers and ensure continuity of operations. Announcements on the status of government operations will be available at www.opm.gov/status/index.aspx. Recorded messages on operating status also will be provided by OPM's Office of Communications and Public Liaison at (202) 606-1900. Announcements on the status of Government operations outside of the Washington, D.C., area will be handled individually by each agency and employees should be aware of their agency's operating status notification procedures.

Recommended Action Steps under Current Flu Conditions (similar severity as in Spring/Summer 2009)

Sick employees should stay home.

People with symptoms of flu-like illness¹ should stay home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever² without the use of a fever-reducing medicine, such as Tylenol®.

Encourage an employee to go home if he or she is not feeling well.

Employees who appear to have a flu-like illness upon arrival or become sick during the work day should be encouraged to go home after discussing leave options with a supervisor.

Encourage your employees to wash their hands often.

Instruct employees to wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Encourage your employees to cover their coughs and sneezes.

Communicate the importance of covering coughs and sneezes and provide tissues and no-touch wastebaskets.

Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact.

Clean surfaces that are frequently touched with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.

Encourage employees to get vaccinated.

Encourage employees to get vaccinated for seasonal flu, and employees at higher risk for flu complications to get vaccinated for 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available to them.³

¹Symptoms of influenza-like illness include fever or chills and cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting.

²Fever is usually described as 100°F [37.8°C] or greater.

³For information on groups prioritized for seasonal flu vaccines see www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm. Different groups are prioritized for 2009 H1N1 flu, for more information see www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm.



Recommended Action Steps under Current Flu Conditions (continued)

Encourage sick employees who are at higher risk for complications of flu to contact their health care provider as soon as possible.

Employees at higher risk for complications of flu, like pregnant women and people with certain chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and asthma, should check with their health care provider promptly, if they become sick. Early treatment with antiviral medications is very important for people at higher risk for flu complications because it can prevent hospitalizations and deaths.

Prepare for increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in employees and their family members and plan ways for essential business functions to continue.

Cross-train staff to perform essential functions so that operations can continue.

Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps.

Advise workers to check for signs of flu-like illness before traveling, to notify their supervisor, and stay home if they are sick. Tell employees who are traveling how to seek health care if they become sick and need care. If employees become sick during travel, they should stay in their hotel room, until 24 hours after their fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine, unless they are seeking medical care.

Prepare for the possibility of school dismissals or temporary closure of early childhood development programs.

Allow workers to stay home to take care of their children if schools are dismissed or early childhood development programs are closed. Encourage your employees with children to plan for child care alternatives if possible.

Additional Action Steps to Consider Under Conditions of Increased Severity (compared to Spring/Summer 2009)

If flu conditions become more severe than that of spring/summer 2009, there may be even higher employee absenteeism and a need to add additional protective measures. Consider the following measures if flu conditions are more severe and use them along with the action steps above.

Consider active screening of employees who report to work, where health practitioners are present at the worksite.

At the beginning of the workday or the beginning of each shift, ask all employees about flu-like symptoms¹ and those with symptoms should be encouraged to go home.

Consider alternative work arrangements for employees at higher risk for complications of flu during periods of increased flu activity in the community.

When possible, change work duties, work location, or work schedules for employees who are at higher risk for flu complications to reduce the number of exposures to people that may have flu. If this cannot be done, allow these employees to work from home or stay home, if feasible.

Increase social distancing in the workplace.

Avoid crowded work settings, cancel large business-related face-to-face meetings, space workers farther apart, cancel non-essential travel, promote teleworking, and use staggered shifts to have fewer workers in the workplace at the same time.

Advise employees about possible disruptions and special considerations while traveling overseas.

Travel restrictions may be enacted by some countries, which may limit the ability of employees to return home if they become sick while traveling. Plan ahead to limit non-essential travel and create contingency plans for employees on international travel.

Prepare for school dismissal or closure of early childhood development programs.

School dismissals and closure of early childhood development programs are more likely when flu conditions are more severe. Be prepared to allow workers to stay home to care for their children if schools are dismissed or early childhood development programs are closed.

Other considerations.

Employers should be aware that the severity of 2009 H1N1 flu could change rapidly and local public health recommendations to communities and businesses could be revised quickly. Planners should identify sources of timely and accurate information so that they are aware of changes to recommendations and can promptly implement revised or additional measures.